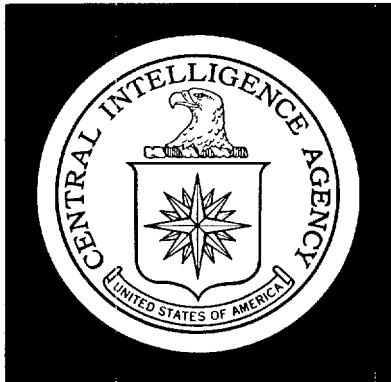


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Central Intelligence Bulletin

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17 April 1970

State Dept. review completed

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Approved For Release 2003/05/29 : CIA-RDP79T00975A016000080001-5

Approved For Release 2003/05/29 : CIA-RDP79T00975A016000080001-5

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No. 0092/70
17 April 1970

Central Intelligence Bulletin

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*Indochina: There are some suggestions that the Communist powers may be moving toward a new initiative for a conference on Indochina.

Soviet Ambassador to the UN Malik appeared to be testing the diplomatic atmosphere in his remarks in New York yesterday. Without stating that the USSR would join with the UK in calling for a Geneva-type conference, he noted that the Soviet Union was "paying the closest attention" to the recent French proposal for such a meeting. [redacted]

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[redacted]
His suggestion that "only a new Geneva conference can bring about a correct solution and a relaxation of tension in the Indochina peninsula," however, appears to carry Moscow beyond its previous public position and may presage some move to substitute a larger conference for the unproductive talks in Paris.

This more positive Soviet position on the question of Indochina talks almost certainly has been coordinated with Hanoi. Moscow has shown great reluctance to move far beyond North Vietnam on questions of this nature. Moreover, Le Duc Tho has been in the Soviet capital consulting with the Russians for the past six days, and other Vietnamese are due to join him in time for the forthcoming Lenin centennial.

At the same time, Hanoi will want to discuss the question with the Chinese. [redacted]

[redacted] First Secretary Le Duan is en route to the Moscow celebrations. A stop in Peking would allow him an opportunity to explore the question with the Chinese. [redacted]

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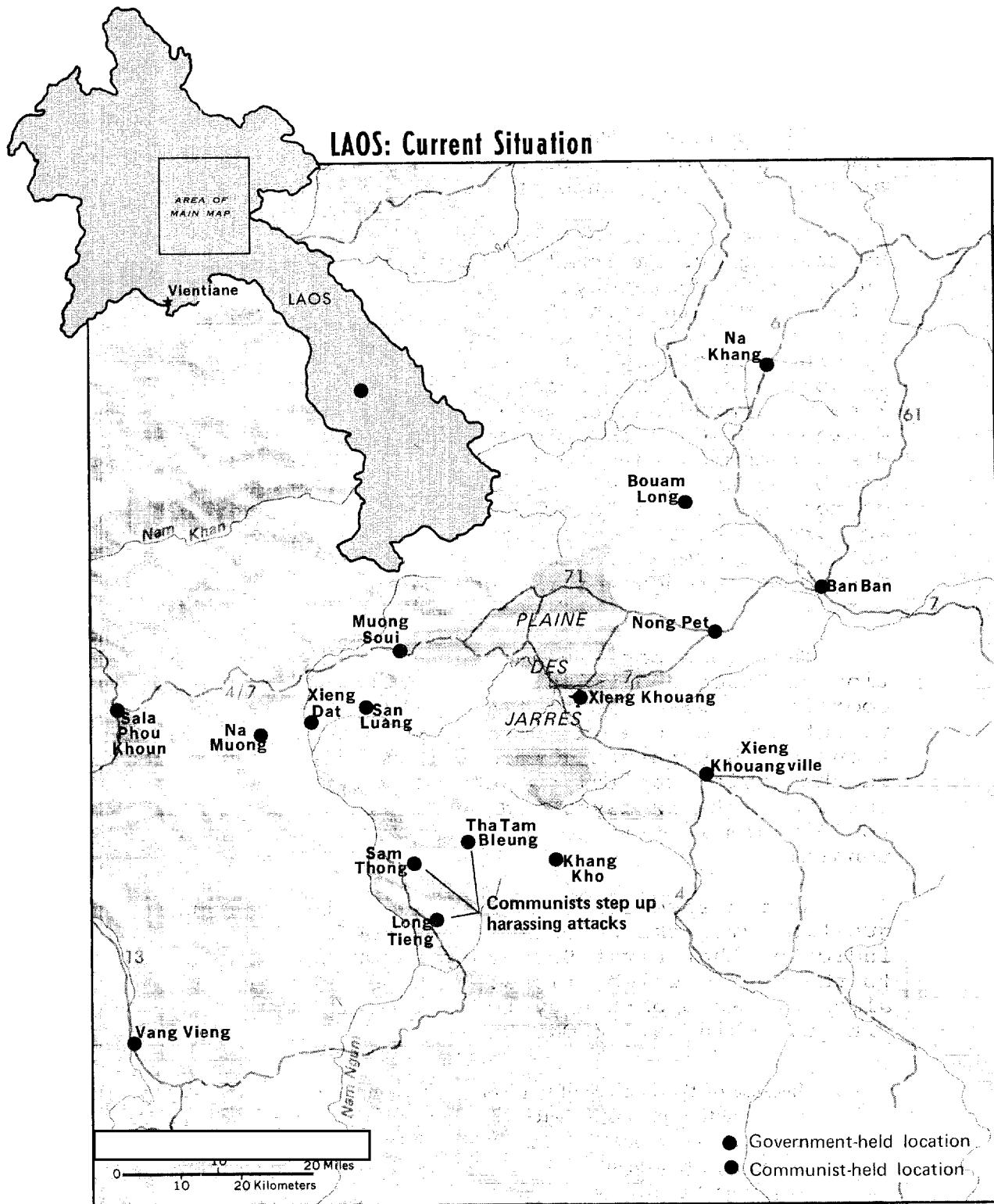
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Laos: The Communists have launched a new round of harassing attacks against Vang Pao's headquarters complex.

Long Tieng came under enemy rocket fire early yesterday, forcing a temporary closure of the air-strip. The nearby government base at Sam Thong was also shelled, and one of its supporting outposts was attacked and overrun by North Vietnamese infantrymen. In addition, guerrilla defenders of a position just north of the recently recaptured government base at Tha Tam Bleung beat off a sharp ground attack by a company of enemy regulars.

Vang Pao is taking steps to counter the growing North Vietnamese buildup in his area. Two government battalions yesterday successfully assaulted several enemy positions along a ridge some 12 miles northeast of Long Tieng. Plans are also under way to saturate the entire region with company-sized patrols which will have artillery and air support readily available.

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Malaysia: A leading Malay newspaper has come close to suggesting a military coup by discussing successful military take-overs in other countries.

An editorial in a recent issue of the largest Malay language newspaper in the country, one which is often used as a mouthpiece by the leading government Malay party, praised the country's security forces and claimed that more and more educated people are joining the military and the police. The strongest note in the article is a statement asking: "Is it not a fact that world history has shown that there are times when civil administration has to be taken over by police and military such as in Burma, Pakistan, and other countries in the world? Whether they like it or not they have to shoulder responsibility."

A high-ranking military officer was quoted as one source for the article, but the statements regarding military participation in the government are unsourced. They appear to reflect earlier rumors of dissatisfaction within the Malay-dominated military structure over the government's failure to promote adequately Malay interests vis-a-vis the Chinese. The story may have been floated as a trial balloon at a time when a number of top civilian leaders are abroad.

In any case, the armed forces are unlikely at present to act against the government. The editorial may be an attempt by an opportunistic government leader, most probably Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs Ghazali, to gain support among the military.

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Canada: Government officials have reacted unfavorably to the US note of 14 April that took issue with Canada's draft legislation on pollution controls in the Arctic and on extension of its territorial seas to 12 miles.

External Affairs Ministry Under Secretary Ritchie told a US Embassy representative that the tone and at least part of the substance of the note strengthen the hand of those whom the US would not wish to strengthen.

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Ritchie also criticized the US call for an international conference on the Arctic in which Canada was asked only "to join in." He did welcome, however, the State Department's public statement of 15 April, which he found considerably different in tone from the text of the formal note.

There has been little international response so far to the proposed conference.

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A Swedish official remarked to a US Embassy officer that while he could not speak for his superiors, Stockholm "will want to participate" in a conference.

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***Dominican Republic:** The accord reached yesterday between President Balaguer and the opposition parties overshadowed the generally peaceful return of Juan Bosch.

Balaguer, who is seeking re-election on 16 May, temporarily resigned the presidency last night as part of an agreement to guarantee free elections and end the opposition's threatened electoral boycott. Presidential candidate and current Vice President Lora also resigned to allow the president of the Supreme Court, a respected political neutral, to assume provisional leadership. The agreement permits Balaguer to reassume power on 22 May, by which time the election results will presumably be validated, or at any time in the interim in the event of a threat to public order.

Former president Bosch's heralded return passed without serious disturbances, although two were reportedly killed and several wounded in another confused incident between police and crowds attracted by his arrival. Bosch's plans are probably characteristically ill-defined. He has expressed no interest in public office and, in any event, the inscription period for candidates has ended. His party, the major opposition Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), apparently still plans to abstain from the elections.

Bosch and the PRD may nonetheless work toward a tactical alliance supporting an opposition candidate. The other parties, although anxious to reap the benefits of PRD support at the polls, are likely to hold Bosch himself at arm's length politically. They are aware that Balaguer would like nothing better than to tar the opposition with his extremist image and repeat his successful electoral strategy of four years ago, when he handily defeated Bosch in a two-man race.

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Bolivia: The deteriorating internal security situation and rumors of impending changes in the military high command could trigger a political crisis.

The armed forces are becoming increasingly concerned about the government's permissive attitude toward spreading student disruptions and growing labor problems. The "revolutionary committees," which were recently formed by students at several Bolivian universities to reform the educational system, have turned to violence in the past three days. The government's mild reaction to the agitation has not appeased leftist students, who maintain they have just begun to oppose the government.

The US Embassy reports that there is widespread speculation in La Paz that radical cabinet ministers are behind both the student "revolution" and the mine and petroleum workers' demands for a "socialist state." There are also rumors that General Miranda, the well-liked commander of the army, is one of 40 top military officers to be reassigned.

If any or all of these rumors prove to be true, a showdown between the military and the radicals in the government would probably occur. General Miranda, who appears to have the support of the crucial troop commands, reportedly is highly agitated and has termed the present political situation "extremely dangerous."

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Colombia: National Front candidate Misael Pastrana is in a close race with his main challenger, former dictator General Rojas Pinilla, in Sunday's presidential election.

Pastrana's chances have been strengthened by the support given him by the widely respected ex-president, Alberto Lleras. The Front, which has governed since Rojas' ouster in 1957, is preparing its political machine to bring in a heavy rural vote for the lackluster Pastrana.

General Rojas derives most of his strength from the urban areas and the poor. He also has significant support among some elements of the military and police. His rallies have attracted far greater crowds than Pastrana's.

The campaign has been orderly, but serious disturbances could develop if Rojas loses by a small margin.

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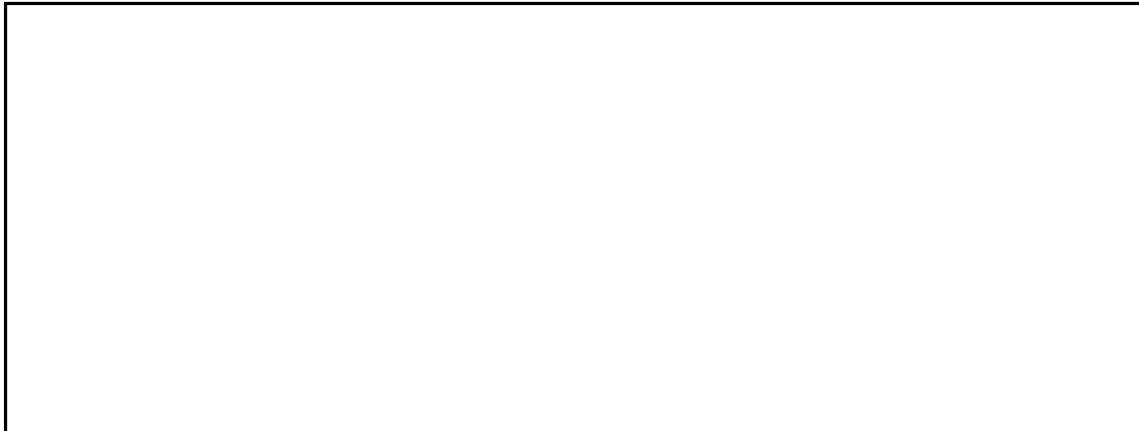
The military recently acquired riot control equipment and should be able to cope with any disturbances.

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Yugoslavia - Communist China: President Tito yesterday named Colonel General Bogdan Orescanin as ambassador to Peking, underscoring the gradual improvement in Yugoslav-Chinese relations. Belgrade announced last November that the two had agreed "in principle" to exchange ambassadors. Orescanin is a 54-year-old career officer with experience in defense and foreign affairs. Peking has not yet indicated when it will reciprocate by sending its own envoy to Belgrade. Nevertheless, the Chinese probably welcome the new appointment, which complements China's recent efforts to increase its diplomatic leverage in areas sensitive to the USSR.

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Brazil: The voluntary entry of US Steel into partnership with one of Brazil's largest government-owned companies will set a new investment pattern for extractive industry in Brazil and perhaps for other Latin American countries. US Steel has just announced that it will sign a contract to exploit rich iron ore deposits in the Amazon region. Its Brazilian partner will handle the marketing. The US company views the joint venture as potentially one of the world's largest operations in ore production.

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Arms Control: Poland, Hungary, and Mongolia have submitted at the Geneva disarmament talks an amendment to the Soviet draft convention banning the development of chemical and biological weapons. Their initiative is a response to criticism that the Soviet draft lacked suitable provisions for verification of compliance with the treaty prohibitions. It would refer complaints of alleged violations to the UN Security Council, which could order on-site inspections. Most of the other Geneva conferees are not likely to regard the amendment as an adequate verification measure.

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